

## Programming On a Shoestring Budget

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First, consider your reality.

*Really, pick up a writing stick and answer these questions:*

- How many sq ft do you have to work with?
- How is your staff involved in programming?
- What budget do you have allocated for programming?
- Who is your programming audience?
- Who should be attending your programs but isn't right now?
- What makes your library unique? (history, staff talents/interests, artwork, location, etc.)
- What is your library's mission & how does your programming support it?

*If you don't know the answer to something, go ask your director, board, or co-workers.  
Go now!*

## A few programming tidbits . . .

### **Always consider your audience & mission!**

*Remember: audience consists of those who currently use the library AND those who don't currently use it . . . But should be...*

### **Focus on implementing the 3 Cs:**

- Creativity
- Community
- Collaboration

### **Keep your eyes & ears open and your radar up!**

Use:

- What you have
  - What you love
  - Who you know
- . . . AND who you need to know...*

### **Remember, too, that everything is a publicity opportunity.**

*The more visible you are, the more you are on others' radar . . . Which leads to more community collaboration!*

Always, always, always . . . take photos . . . And plot library branding into the event . . . Get attendees in front of your building or by a sign with your name on it. This doubles the impact of these photos when they are used for publicity!

(If you aren't in the paper enough, write your own press releases and send your own photos . . . watch your coverage increase!)

## **Remember: People gravitate to where the fun is!**

*"If you create the fun, they will come."*

## Next, Rethink your Space, Staff, Budget . . . and Mission.

For example:

- Putnam's **space** consists not only of the 5 small interior rooms . . . But also library lawn, the neighbor's lawn, and other community spaces.
- Putnam's programming **staff** consists not only of the six part time paid staffers . . . But also volunteers, teens/youth, non-profit organization staffers, Friends of the Library, trustees, and family & friends.
- Putnam's **budget** grows with donations, grants, business giving (cash and in-kind) and by RECYCLING!!!
- Putnam's **vision statement** gives a quick check as to whether or not a program is a good fit.

### Rethink *YOUR* space . . .

*Really, pick up your writing stick and answer these questions:*

- What space is available around a one-block radius?
- What makes your community unique?
- How will you brand events as library events when they aren't physically at the library?
- Think about shared spaces in your community . . . jot down names of who you need to call.

Remember  
The 3 Cs!

Use what you:  
Have  
Love  
Know

## Rethink *YOUR* staff . . .

***Important: The “YOU” in these questions is a collective word.***

***Ask your staff, board, Friends, patrons, etc . . .***

- What organizations can you tap to provide programming? (Think local, county, regional.)
- What talents do your neighbors, friends, and family have?
- Who do you know who knows everyone else?

Remember  
The 3 Cs!

Use what you:  
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Love  
Know

## Rethink *YOUR* budget . . .

***Use what you have!***

- Do you have an area you need decorated/redecorated?
- Do you have surplus supplies?
- Are there special community events/holidays to maximize?
- Who would love to donate to you in exchange for a little good publicity?
- Who are the granting organizations in your area? (Local? County? State? Corporate?)

## Don't forget those people you "need to know" . . .

- Who would your "Celebrity Readers" be?
- Who might become a funder/donor if you engage them in programming?
- Who leads your community initiatives?

*Remember to invite your district's politicians to events; it is important for them to see (and be part of) the good things going on at your library.*

Remember  
The 3 Cs!

Use what you:  
Have  
Love  
Know

## A few parting thoughts about shoestring stretching . . .

- Keep your eyes, ears, and radar open!
- Think of every conversation as a programming opportunity.
- Use what you have, who you know, and what you love. (Remember the collective YOU.)
- When asking businesses to donate encourage them to give what they have on hand . . . reduced price merchandise and gift certificates.
- Investigate grant opportunities:
  - Community foundations, private foundations, & local organizations
    - Youth Advisory Council in your area
  - Corporate granting & giftmaking
    - (<http://walmartstores.com/CommunityGiving/10526.aspx>)
    - ([http://www2.dollargeneral.com/dgliteracy/Pages/grant\\_programs.aspx](http://www2.dollargeneral.com/dgliteracy/Pages/grant_programs.aspx))
    - (<http://sites.target.com/site/en/company/page.jsp?contentId=WCMP04-031821>)
  - Michigan Humanities Council – Touring & Quick Grants
  - Michigan Center for the Book
  - Friends of Michigan Libraries
- <http://www.programminglibrarian.org/home.html>
- <http://sharing.michlibrary.org> (maintained by Natalie Bazan – Hopkins District Library)
- [http://www.libsuccess.org/index.php?title=Programs\\_for\\_Adults](http://www.libsuccess.org/index.php?title=Programs_for_Adults)
- Mich-Lib-l, other listservs, and library blogs
- Connect with your community nonprofits. They will love for you to get their message out!

## A Case In Point . . . “T Party” . . . expansion of space, staff, & budget!

Whether a traditional “tea party” or a “trucks and other tough stuff T party” . . . look at how Putnam expanded its programming at T parties!

### Space Expansion

- Used the Fire Barn (across the street) instead of library lawn on a rainy day
- Used the local community banquet hall (end of the block-below community theatre)
- Using parking lot behind downtown (one block away)

### Staff Expansion

- Girl Scouts (provided entertainment, acted as servers, and created publicity fliers)
- Local festival queen & court (activity assistance)
- Teen leaders (servers)
- Community theatre (entertainment)
- Local businesses (big trucks = entertainment for kids & PR for businesses!)

### Budget Expansion

- Girl Scouts & leaders did some of the food
- Volunteers also assisted with food – and we served small portions
- People come somewhat dressed up already
- Borrowed tea cups and pots
- Recycled materials to create flashy publicity fliers
- Businesses with trucks provided their own giveaways

### Expansion with “who we need to know”

- There’s nothing like a dad at a tea party!
- Former, current, and someday Friends and library board members
- Village council members & business owners
- Future volunteers

Remember  
The 3 Cs!

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Love  
Know

**Seize every opportunity for publicity! After the Fancy Nancy Tea Party, we had a parade around the block once everyone we decked out . . . the traffic certainly wondered what the library was up to that day!**

### Some Putnam Gems:

- Cupcake decorating (cousin)
- Balloon artist (patron)
- Belly dance (friend)
- Stilt walker (neighbor)
- Band & art students
- Leadership class/Honor Society
- Local artist (both today & yesterday)
- Origami jewelry (mom)
- Button collecting (patron)
- Miniature making (patron)
- Travel series (friends & family)
- Storytelling (retired teacher)
- Local nature preserve
- Local arts council
- Local conservation district
- Local community foundation

- Art kits in used VHS cases!

- Journals from cereal boxes!

Instead of buying new ceiling tiles in the children's room, we extended their life by hosting a **ceiling painting event**! We took the ceiling tiles out on library lawn and, after reading the book *It Looked Like Spilt Milk*, has patrons help us make clouds for the ceiling. Families still come in a look for "their" cloud on the ceiling.

Each year we host a mini **Festival of the Trees**. Area organizations, businesses, and families decorate according to the theme of the year. It decorates the library, engages the community stakeholders by offering free advertising, and the Friends group has voting jars by each tree to collect people's loose change.

Our Friends group works with us to do live music on library lawn (actually a neighbor's lawn to the north of us) each summer. Groups perform for free (or nearly free) and the Friends sell popcorn and baked goods. A local merchant donates bottled water to sell and there is a "pass the hat" portion each week. Last year, the **Lyrics on the Lawn** raised enough to buy the library a portable sound system to use for programming! (It's also a great way to bring people down to the library who aren't regular users.)

For years, the local high school leadership class converted the library into a wildly popular **haunted house**. The project became too big for staff and we were hearing that lots of kids were afraid to visit our haunted library. ☹ Now, the teens host a library **decorating party** at the start of October and deck out the interior of the library with playful spookiness.

Teen leaders from our **Teen Advisory Group** also assist with children's programming throughout the year. They also hold events for teens and their own fundraisers so they can do programs. Empowering teen leaders is a great way to stretch staff & budget . . . especially if you have staff who enjoy working with this age group!

**Celebrity Readers** are a win-win. The kids love seeing new faces and the "celebrities" love the experience. We have had a: fireman, policeman, superintendent, teachers, county commissioner, state representative, state senator, US senator, Lt. governor, newspaper reporter, library and Friends board members, local mascots (pizza, penny, & school), and businessmen & women.

Getting good attendance at Celebrity Reader events is important! You want your celebrity's time to be well used and to show off your successful library programming to them as well. To increase attendance at our last Celebrity Storytime, the teens hosted a **Stuffed Animal Sleepover** as well. After storytime, kids checked their animals in and filled out information cards about them. The teens used this information to take photos of each animal doing "library things" in the library. We printed 15-20 photos for each animal overnight and the kids picked up their animals AND a photo album of their adventures the next morning . . . when there was a second Celebrity Reader event.

Use a free (safe) **website** to create a program about. One summer the teens had an event about [www.postcrossing.org](http://www.postcrossing.org) where the teens signed up to trade postcards internationally. The library paid the postage for the first five and recycled old postcards featuring the library in the process. Some Internet surfing will provide other options like this. (Tons of craft ideas abound . . . **Pinterest**, anyone?)

Our teens also host an annual **Photo Scavenger Hunt** for students in grades 5-12. Each team uses a digital camera to take photos based on a list of "super secret clues" we give them at the start of the race. They run around the village taking photos. When they return we watch a slideshow of the photos while they have a pizza party. The library staff scores them with bonus points for creativity. Prizes are awarded but bragging rights are important. Photos are posted on Facebook for the "hunters" to have access to.